SHENANDOAH VALLEY NEWS

Valley Libraries eliminate overdue fines as of July

Library shelves (Source: WHSV)

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After months of closure due to COVID-19, libraries around the Shenandoah Valley began gradually reopening in May as Virginia started moving through its phased reopening plan.

Most started by opening book drops back up and restarting curbside pick-up for books, with patrons allowed to place up to 15 holds per library card.

During Virginia's state of emergency due to coronavirus, the library temporarily waived all overdue fines.

But now, the Augusta County Library is taking a new step for their customers that the library hasn't taken before: making that a permanent policy.

As of Wednesday, July 1, fines for overdue library materials will officially be a thing of the past at all three libraries in the Valley Libraries system: the Augusta County Library, the Staunton Public Library, and the Waynesboro Public Library.

According to a press release issued by the Augusta County Library on Wednesday, all overdue fines will be eliminated and previously accrued overdue fines will be waived.

"We know that life happens sometimes," says Augusta County Library Director, Diantha McCauley. "It can be difficult to return items on time. But we don't want overdue fines to dissuade our patrons from the free services that our libraries offer, so we're going fine free and giving everyone a fresh start."

Staff say that the Valley Libraries are "committed to providing equal access to every member of the community," and that going fine free is a way to achieve that.

Library staff hope that eliminating overdue fines will remove barriers and make library access easy and enjoyable for everyone in the community.

It does not mean that the cost for lost or damaged items goes away, though—those charges will stay on users' accounts.

The Augusta County Library is located at 1759 Jefferson Hwy, Fishersville, VA. Other locations include a Churchville branch, as well as stations in Craigsville, Deerfield, Middlebrook, and Stuarts Draft.

For questions more information, you can contact the Augusta County Library at 540-885-3961, the Staunton Public Library at 540-332-3902, or the Waynesboro Public Library at 540-942-6746. You can also visit www.valleylibraries.org to search for materials at all three libraries, and to place items on hold.
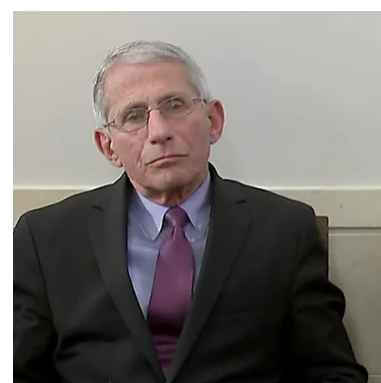
Libraries are also encouraging patrons to use e-services such as Hoopla Digital, OverDrive/Libby, RBDigital, Early World of Learning, and EBSCO E-Books, which may be accessed at www.augustacountylibrary.org/apps.